

Curricula for K-12 Civics Education

**Lesson Plan: National Symbols** 

## Context of the unit:

The basic structure of this unit involves the understanding that our government was built and established upon cherished ideals. Once defined, a system of laws and rules are developed to insure these ideals are upheld. Throughout our history as a nation, landmarks, monuments and symbols have been adopted to represent what our country stands for. Students obtain a deep understanding that public virtue and the role of citizens develop when each member in our society holds themselves accountable to these cherished ideals.

#### Context of the lesson within the unit:

This project is at the beginning of the unit. It introduces national symbols, landmarks and monuments and what they stand for. Once students begin to understand the abstract representation of symbols they are given the task to develop a flag to represent their classroom.

## Standards Addressed: History Social Science

- 3.4 Students understand the role of rules and laws in our daily lives and the basic structure of the U.S. government.
  - 3.4.1 Determine the reason for rules, laws, and the U.S. Constitution; the role of citizenship in the promotion of rules and laws; and the consequences for people who violate rules and laws.
  - 3.4.2 Discuss the importance of public virtue and the roles of citizens, including how to participate in classroom, in the community and in civic life.
  - 3.4.3 Know the histories of important local and national landmarks, symbols, and essential documents that create a sense of community among citizens and exemplify cherished ideals.

Standards Addressed: English/Language Arts

Reading Comprehension

2.5 Distinguish the main idea and supporting details in expository text.



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2.6 Extract appropriate and significant information from the text, including problems and solutions.

## Writing:

- 2.3 Write personal and formal letters, thank-you notes, and invitations:
  - a. Show awareness of the knowledge and interests of the audience and establish a purpose and context.
  - b. Include the date, proper salutation, body, closing, and signature.

Common Core State Standards for ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects Grade 5<sup>th</sup> Students

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading K-5

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

1. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

#### Craft and Structure

2. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

#### College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing K-5

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.



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## Objective(s):

Students will know the histories of important national landmarks, symbols, and essential documents that create a sense of community among citizens and exemplify cherished ideals.

Students will understand the importance of public virtue and the roles of citizens, including how to participate in classroom, in the community and in civic life.

Students will use symbols to represent cherished ideals established as a classroom community.



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## Big Idea(s):

- Understand U.S. History (specifically the history around national monuments, landmarks and symbols)
- The foundation of rules and laws are established through shared ideals.

#### **Essential Questions/Issues:**

The strength of a democracy is equal to the strength of its citizens (We must understand, participate in, and further develop our system of government to ensure democracy).

## **Higher Order Thinking Questions:**

- 1. In your opinion, is it important to establish common ideals as a foundation for strengthening community in the classroom? (Evaluation)
- 2. Develop a list ideals that should be adopted in the classroom and explain why they are important? (Analysis)
- 3. How can these ideals be represented through symbols on a Class Flag? (Synthesis)



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#### **Assessment:**

Students will be evaluated through informal checks for understanding, teacher observation, writing, class participation, and artwork.

Students will complete a "Museum Notebook" summarizing eight different national symbols, landmarks and monuments.

Students will write a friendly letter describing their favorite symbol or monument, what it represents and why it is important to them.

Students will create a Class Flag using symbols and colors to represent the cherished ideals the class, as a whole, have agreed upon.

Students will present their completed flag to the class stating why they chose specific symbols and what they represent

#### **Quality Criteria:**

Necessary components of a friendly letter – Rubric (following Pages)

Necessary components of the Museum Notebook – Rubric (following pages)

Class Flag with oral presentation: Student interpretation – no rubric - Scored as:

*Credit*: Student sites at least one symbol on their flag and explains how it represents an agreed upon classroom cherished ideal.

*No Credit*: Students is not able to make a connection between a symbol on the flag and an agreed upon classroom cherished ideal.



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## **Social Studies National Symbol-Museum Notebook Rubric:**

<b>Quality Level</b>	Applications	Strategies	Conventions
4 - Advanced	Student has	Entries are written	Contains few if any
	completed	in clear coherent	errors in grammar,
	descriptions of all 8	sentences	punctuation,
	symbols. Each		capitalization, spelling
	includes the name,		and sentence structure.
	what it represents,		
	and one or more		Errors do not interfere
	distinct, clear facts.		with the reader's
			understanding.
3-Proficient	Student has	Entries are written	Contains some errors in
	completed	in coherent	grammar, punctuation,
	descriptions of at	sentences	capitalization, spelling
	least 6 symbols. Each		and sentence structure
	includes the name,		
	what it represents,		Errors do not interfere
	and one fact.		with the reader's
			understanding.
2-Partially	Student has	Some sentences	Contains several errors in
Proficient	completed	are weak and not	grammar, punctuation,
	descriptions of at	clear or coherent.	capitalization, spelling
	least 4 symbols. Each		and sentence structure
	includes the name,		
	what it represents,		Errors may interfere with
	and one fact that		the reader's
	may be vague or		understanding.
	unclear.		



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1-Not	Student has	Sentences are weak	Contains numerous
Proficient	completed	and not coherent	errors in grammar,
	descriptions of less		punctuation,
	than 4 symbols. Facts		capitalization, spelling
	and descriptions are		and sentence structure.
	unclear and		
	incomplete.		Errors interfere with the
			reader's understanding.

## **Social Studies National Symbol-Friendly Letter Rubric:**

Quality Level	Applications	Strategies	Conventions
4 -Advanced	Includes all	Conveys the	Contains few if any
	elements of a	intended message	errors in the
	personal letter.	through coherent	conventions of
		sentences.	English language.
	Letter establishes a		
	clear purpose and	Includes the four	Errors do not
	context.	items listed in the	interfere with the
		assignment – Name	readers
		of symbol, what it	understanding of
		represents, a fact or	the writing.
		some history, why it	
		is their favorite.	



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3 - Proficient	Includes most	Conveys the	Contains some
3 Troncient	elements of a	intended message	errors in the
		_	
	personal letter	through coherent	conventions of
		sentences	English language
	Letter establishes a		
	purpose and	Includes three of	Errors do not
	context for which it	four items listed in	interfere with the
	is being written.	the assignment –	readers
		Name of symbol,	understanding of
		what it represents,	the writing.
		a fact or some	
		history, why it is	
		their favorite.	
2 – Partially	Includes some	Some evidence that	Contains several
Proficient	elements of a	conveys the	errors in the
	personal letter	intended message	conventions of
		through coherent	English language
	Letter does not	sentences	
	establish a clear		Errors may interfere
	purpose and does	Includes the two	with the readers
	1 -	items listed in the	
	not give a context		understanding of
	for which it is being	assignment – Name	the writing.
	written.	of symbol, what it	
		represents, a fact or	
		represents, a fact or some history, why it	



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1 – Not Proficient	Includes few	Little or no	Contains few if any
	elements of a	evidence is present	errors in the
	personal letter.	to convey the	conventions of
		intended message.	English language.
	Letter does not		
	establish a purpose	Address less than	Errors interfere
	and context.	two items listed in	with the readers
		the assignment. –	understanding of
		Name of symbol,	the writing.
		what it represents,	
		a fact or some	
		history, why it is	
		their favorite.	



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#### **Activity Steps:**

The following steps are presented in "days." It is important to know that these days were not consecutive when I presented this project. Our third grade class has Social Studies for one hour twice a week. Therefore, this took about three weeks to complete with the class.

Hook: Project the "Walk/Don't Walk" images from a crosswalk. Ask the students what they mean and how they know their meaning. Students pair share other symbols they know of. Share out these symbols. At some point a student may bring up the US Flag as a symbol. Use this example to bring up the subject of the lesson: US symbols.

Student intro activity after hook.

#### Days 1 & 2:

Before activity: Have four distinct areas in the room each with the image of a national symbol or landmark displayed on the wall or an easel. Along with the image is a brief summary of its history and significance. Have one copy displayed and several other copies provided for the students to refer to as they are visiting the station. Each area will be manned by a docent (either yourself, a paraprofessional or parent volunteer). Have Museum notebooks prepared to hand out to each student.

Announce to the students that for the next two lessons the class will be going on a simulated field trip to a museum of National symbols, monuments and landmarks. As they tour the museum, they will take notes in their Museum Notebook. Use the criteria sheet to display what the students are expected to write in their notebooks at each station. Teacher should model this by completing a page of the notebook on the overhead or elmo projector. Clarify any questions about these expectations before the activity begins. Strategically place the students in four heterogeneous groups and assign them to a station. Docents guide the students as they read about the landmark or symbol displayed. Discuss personal connections and experiences the students may have, then have them complete the notebook page displaying that symbol following the museum criteria chart



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Students rotate through the museum spending 15 minutes at each station and filling in their notebooks.

This activity is repeated on the second day of the unit with four new symbols or monuments displayed.

## Day 3:

Pass out completed Museum Notebooks. Have students share their knowledge of these national symbols.

Explain that the students will write a friendly letter to a family member informing them about their simulated field trip and describing their favorite symbol or landmark. Teacher projects the criteria chart for the friendly letter and goes over the expectations with the students. Then model writing the assignment by choosing one of the symbols in the notebook and writing a friendly letter on the white board. Refer to the criteria list as you write and include each item in the letter.

Allow students to compose their own letters while you circulate, assisting them and clarifying any misunderstanding or questions they may have.

#### Day 4:

Teacher leads a discussion about the significance of the items viewed on the trip to the museum. Gear the discussion to include the reason for national symbols as a way of expressing the cherished ideals our nation is founded upon: Liberty, Justice, independence, etc. Specifically bring up the US Flag and review what the colors represent as well as the stars and stripes.

Students then brainstorm using a "Circle Map" to come up with the cherished ideals that should be displayed in the classroom. Narrow the list down to 7 or 8 words. My class came up with the following: Honor, Caring, Fairness, Individuality, Responsible, Respect, Helpful and Trustworthy.

At this point the students understand how a symbol can represent something abstract,



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such as a cherished ideal. Pass out the sheets of symbols and have them work in pairs deciding which of the cherished ideals the class came up with can be represented by the various symbols. It is important to let the students know that there are not any right or wrong answers here. As long as they can give a good reason why they pick a symbol for an ideal, that is fine. Share out how they labeled the symbols and why.

Assignment: the students will be given a project to do at home with their parents. The project is to design a class flag using symbols and colors to reflect the cherished ideals they came up with in class. Explain that they can use the symbols on the sheet they filled out or they can add any other symbols that they feel reflect one of the cherished ideals the class agreed upon.

I assigned this project on Monday with the final product due on Friday. When I passed out the description of the project, I also gave them their sheet of labeled symbols to use as a reference when working at home.

#### Day 5:

Presentation of Class Flags: Students present their Class Flag to the class explaining the design and what it represents.

#### Special Needs of students are considered in this lesson:

The class I used to develop this project has 23 students - eight of them have IEPs. Their disabilities range from ADHD, Autism, Specific Learning Disabilities and Language and Speech Disorders. The activities and assignments have been developed to benefit all learning styles. Hands on learning with visuals, opportunity for movement, strategic grouping and ownership of learning are all included in the learning activities.

#### **Extension Ideas:**

As the unit continues students will explore why laws are formed, how they are passed and the role of the three branches of government in the process.



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#### **Materials and Resources Needed:**

- Art materials for each student to create an original class flag
- LCD projector and Elmo, or overhead projector
- Museum Notebook (I made these with the image of the symbol on one side of the page and blank lines on the opposite side for notes)
- Images of national symbols (i.e. Statue of Liberty, Washington Monument, Liberty Bell, etc)
- Parent volunteers or paraprofessionals to act as Docents at the simulated museum

#### References:

- California State Frame work of History/Social Science
- <a href="http://www.apples4theteacher.com">http://www.apples4theteacher.com</a>



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## **Student Handouts:**

## Criteria sheet for Museum Notebook:

For the next two days we will be going on a simulated field trip to The Museum of National Symbols and Monuments.

As you go through the museum you will look at and read about several national symbols. Use your Museum Notebook to record the things you see and learn.

On each page of your Museum Notebook write the following:

- 1) Name of the symbol pictured
- 2) What the symbol represents
- 3) One or two facts about the symbol

When you've finished these three things, you may color the symbol.

## **Criteria sheet for friendly letter:**

Today you will write a friendly letter to someone in your family about your simulated trip to the museum. Choose a symbol or landmark that you like the best.

Include the following details in your letter:

The name of the symbol or landmark



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What it represents

A fact or some history about the symbol

Why it is your favorite

Remember to include all the parts of a friendly letter: date, greeting, body, closing, and signature.

# Class Flag Project Third Grade

The third grade standard in civics education is that Students will understand the role of rules and laws in our daily lives and the basic structure of the U.S. Government.

We began by examining several national symbols including the US Flag. We discussed the symbolism of the colors and the design, and how it is based on the ideals we hold for ourselves as a nation.

We went on to discuss the qualities we thought were important for students to display in the classroom. As we brainstormed ideas the following words were brought up:

Responsible

Helpful

Respect

Individuality

Honesty

Friendly

Kind



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Several symbols were shown to the class and we thought about how these symbols represented the qualities we listed.

Your assignment this week is to take these ideas and design a class flag. You can use the symbols we showed in class, or come up with your own. Be creative and have fun. Discuss this with your parents and share with them what you have learned.

Your flag design will be due this Friday.